

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 6136

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 DACCA 5063

STADIS////////////////////////////////////

FOR NEA/PAB COON

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PORG, BG
SUBJECT: PRESIDENTIAL MEETING WITH ZIA

REF: STATE 217569

1. PRESIDENT ZIA ATTACHES GREAT IMPORTANCE TO A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER. HE HAS BEEN RECEIVED WITH ACCLAMATION IN PEKING AND HAS A STANDING INVITATION (WHICH HE HAS NOT YET ACCEPTED) TO MOSCOW. HE BELIEVES VISIBLE SUPPORT IN THE FORM OF A MEETING WITH PRESIDENT CARTER AND LEADERS OF OTHER WESTERN DEMOCRACIES IS HIGHLY IMPORTANT AS HE PURSUES HIS PLANS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND POPULAR POLITICAL PARTICIPATION FOR BANGLADESH. THESE PLANS HAVE RECEIVED THE ENDORSEMENT OF THE PEOPLE OF BANGLADESH IN THE MAY REFERENDUM. (A PARALLEL MESSAGE DEALS WITH POSSIBLE SUBJECTS FOR A MEETING BETWEEN SHAMSUL HUQ AND THE SECRETARY, WITH THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE FORMER MAY RAISE ISSUES WHICH ZIA WOULD NOT.)

2. A MEETING WITH ZIA NOW WOULD BE AGAINST A BACKDROP OF THE FOLLOWING FAVORABLE DEVELOPMENTS AND
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WOULD GIVE US THE OPPORTUNITY TO ENCOURAGE FURTHER PROGRESS IN SEVERAL IMPORTANT AREAS.

A. BANGLADESH NO LONGER SEES ITSELF AS AN "INTERNATIONAL BASKET CASE" BUT RATHER SHOWS, UNDER ZIA, GROWING SELF-RESPECT AND SELF-RELIANCE. PROGRESS IS BEING MADE IN SOME AREAS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT,

LOCAL CAPITAL IS STARTING TO COME FORWARD AND THERE IS IN DACCA A GROWING SENSE OF CONFIDENCE. FOODGRAIN PRODUCTION HAS INCREASED, THOUGH NOT AS MUCH AS HE OR WE WOULD LIKE. THE POPULATION PLANNING PROGRAM IS DEVELOPING WITH OUR ASSISTANCE AND THAT OF OTHERS. LAW AND ORDER CONDITIONS ARE VASTLY IMPROVED FROM THE LAST DAYS OF THE MUJIB REGIME. GIVEN THE BASIC FOOD - NUTURAL RESOURCES - POPULATION RATION, THE SITUATION IS STILL FRAGILE, BUT REAL PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE DURING THE PAST TWO YEARS.

B. BANGLADESH IS MOVING TOWARD REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT. ZIA HAS ALREADY COMPLETED LOCAL LEVEL ELECTIONS (EXCEPT IN DACCA, WHERE MUNICIPAL VOTING WILL BE HELD LATER THIS MONTH) AND HAS COMMITTED HIMSELF TO HOLD DISTRICT LEVEL (COUNTY) ELECTIONS LATER THIS YEAR AND NATIONAL ELECTIONS BY DECEMBER 1978 AT THE LATEST. HE HAS REITERATED THIS COMMITMENT PUBLICLY AND IN PRIVATE DISCUSSIONS WITH US.

C. THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION HAS IMPROVED UNDER ZIA, THOUGH THERE ARE STILL PROBLEMS. AS NOTED ABOVE, HE IS MOVING STEADILY TOWARD GREATER POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT. HE HAS ALSO RELEASED OVER 3,000 POLITICAL PRISONERS THOUGH SOME REMAIN FROM THE PREVIOUS REGIME AND ZIA HAS, IN THE NAME OF PRESERVING LAW AND ORDER, PICKED UP ABOUT 200 DURING THE PAST YEAR. TO THE BEST OF OUR KNOWLEDGE THERE IS CONFIDENTIAL

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NO TORTURE OR INHUMANE TREATMENT.

D. ZIA HAS GAINED MATURITY AND CONFIDENCE SINCE HE TOOK POWER IN NOVEMBER 1975 FOLLOWING THREE COUPS AND A PERIOD OF ECONOMIC CHAOS. HE GRASPS PROBLEMS AND WEIGHS ALTERNATIVES ARTFULLY BEFORE REACHING A DECISION. HE HAS WORKED, NOT ALWAYS WITH COMPLETE SUCCESS, TO IMPROVE THE IMPLEMENTATION OF POLICY DECISIONS WITHIN THE INEFFICIENT BANGLADESH BUREAUCRACY. HE LOOKS TO THE RURAL AREAS AS THE PLACE WHERE PROGRESS MUST BEGIN, BUT HAS BEEN HANDICAPPED BY A PAUCITY OF ADMINISTRATORS AT THE LOCAL LEVEL.

E. IN THE INTERNATIONAL AREA, ZIA HAS TAKEN STEPS TO IMPROVE REGIONAL RELATIONS, MOST RECENTLY BY HIS OWN VISIT TO BURMA AND THE TRIP OF THE FOREIGN SECRETARY TO PAKISTAN. THE BORDER INFILTRATION PROBLEM WITH INDIA HAS BEEN SETTLED, ALTHOUGH THE DIFFICULT QUESTION ON DIVIDING THE WATERS OF THE GANGES AT FARAKKA SEEMS TO BE AS FAR FROM SOLUTION NOW AS IN THE PAST. BANGLADESH IS WARY OF INDIA BUT WE DO NOT DETECT THE PARANOID PATTERN WHICH PREVAILED WHEN THIS NATION WAS A PART OF PAKISTAN; RATHER WE

SEE A REALIZATION, ALBEIT RELUCTANT, THAT INDIA IS
LARTER, STRONGER, AND THAT ITS VIEWS AND ACTIONS MUST
BE ACCEPTED HERE AS LONG AS THESE DO NOT IMPINGE ON
BANGLADESH'S VITAL INTERESTS.

F. SINCE ZIA ASSUMED LEADERSHIP IN NOVEMBER 1975,
BANGLADESH HAS BEEN AMONG THE "MODERATES" IN THE NAM
AND HAS BEEN HELPFUL IN COLOMBO AND THE FOREIGN MINISTERS'
MEETING IN NEW DELHI. ON THE OTHER HAND,
THERE HAS BEEN AN INCREASE DURING THIS PERIOD OF
"SOLIDARITY" WITH THE ISLAMIC COUNTRIES WHICH, WHILE HAVING
ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE BELEFITS TO BANGLADESH, HAS FOUND
BANGLADESH FOLLOWING WITH OSTENSIBLE ENTHUSIAMMS MANY
LEADS FROM THE ARABS ON MIDDLE EAST PROBLEMS.

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3. ISSUES TO BE DISCUSSED.

WE DO NOT BELIEVE ZIA WILL RAISE "CONTROVERSIAL" ISSUES
WITH THE PRESIDENT.

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ACTION NEA-10

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 DACCA 5063

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FOR NEA/PAB COON

AMONG THESE WE WOULD INCLUDE MILITARY HARDWARE
ASSISTANCE AND THE RESEARCH NUCLEAR REACTOR REQUEST.HE WANTS A
MEETING PRIMARILY TO ESTABLISH HIS BONAFIDES WITH THE LEADER
OF THE WESTERN WORLD BUT HE WILL, AT THE SAME TIME,

ALMOST CERTAINLY WANT TO DISCUSS SOME ASPECTS OF ECONOMIC AID.
WE SUGGEST THE FOLLOWING BE INCLUDED AMONG THE TALKING
POINTS BEING PREPARED FOR A POSSIBLE MEETING.

A. FOOD ASSISTANCE: WE WOULD EXPECT ZIA TO RAISE
THE QUESTION OF CONTINUED AND PROBABLY INCREASED
PL-480 FOOD ASSISTANCE TO BANGLADESH, AS HE DID IN HIS
LETTER TO PRESIDENT CARTER OF JUNE 10, 1977.
THIS IS A MATTER OF GREAT IMPORTANCE TO HIM BOTH
ECONOMICALLY AND POLITICALLY. THE POLITICAL STABILITY
OF THE COUNTRY, AS HE SEES IT, IS VERY MUCH DEPENDENT UPON
A REGULAR AND REASONABLY PRICE SUPPLY OF FOODGRAIN,
ESPECIALLY IN THE URBAN AREAS. WE WOULD HOPE THAT THE
PRESIDENT WOULD AGAIN ASSURE ZIA THAT WE WILL CONTINUE
TO GIVE SYMPATHETIC CONSIDERATION TO BANGLADESH'S FOOD
NEEDS. TO THIS END WE HAVE PLEDGED 300,000 TONS OF FOOD
TO BANGLADESH UNDER OUR FY 78 PL-480 PROGRAM. ALSO TO
CONTRIBUTE TO WORLDWIDE EMERGENCY FOOD NEEDS, WE
HAVE PLEDGED 6 MILLION TONS OF FOODGRAIN TO AN
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INTERNATIONAL RESERVE SYSTEM. HOWEVER, WE DO EXPECT
BANGLADESH TO PURSUE DILIGENTLY THE SELF-HELP PROVISIONS
TO WHICH IT HAS AGREED. WE ARE CONCERNED THAT EXCESSIVE
FOOD IMPORTS AND UNDUE RELIANCE ON SUBSIDIZED FOOD
DISTRIBUTION, PARTICULARLY WHEN BANGLADESH'S FOODGRAIN
STOCKS ARE AT HIGH LEVELS, WILL DISCOURAGE LOCAL
PRODUCTION. PRESIDENT ZIA HIMSELF HAS TALKED PUBLICLY
ABOUT THE NEED TO ACHIEVE SELF-SUFFICIENCY IN FOODGRAIN
PRODUCTION. WE SUPPORT THIS GOAL, WANT TO HELP
BANGLADESH ACHIEVE IT AND WANT OUR PL-480 AID TO
REINFORCE RATHER THAN DETRACT FROM PROGRESS IN THIS FIELD.

B. POPULATION PLANNING: ZIA STRONGLY SUPPORTS FAMILY
PLANNING MEASURES AND PRESUMABLY WILL WISH TO RAISE THIS
SUBJECT WITH THE PRESIDENT. WE SUGGEST THE PRESIDENT
RECOGNIZE THE EFFORTS UNDERTAKEN SO FAR BY BANGLADESH SO
FAR, SOUND ZIA OUT ON MEASURES HE MAY CONTEMPLATE TO
ACCELERATE PROGRESS AND STATE OUR CONTINUED
SUPPORT TO THE BDG. WE ARE DISCUSSING NOW WITH THE BDG HELP
FOR THE CONSTRUCTION OF INTEGRATED RURAL HEALTH CENTERS,

WHICH WOULD HANDLE FAMILY PLANNING AT THE LOCAL LEVEL,
AND FOR PROGRAM OF VOLUNTARY STERILIZATION.

(NOTE: ZIA BELIEVES THIS SHOULD BE ONE FAMILY PLANNING
METHOD BUT HE IS CONVINCED, GIVEN THE INDIAN EXPERIENCE,
THAT IT MUST BE STRICTLY VOLUNTARY.)

C. RURAL DEVELOPMENT: IN A BROADER SENSE, ZIA
LOOKS FOR ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT
IN THE RURAL AREAS. HERE WE CAN ASSURE ZIA THAT WE
WILL PROVIDE CONCRETE SUPPORT FOR A VARIETY OF

ECONOMIC PROGRAMS: FOOD FOR WORK, RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE
ENDEAVORS (E.G., ELECTRIFICATION, ROADS TO MARKETS)
AND MANAGEMENT TRAINING SCHEMES.

D. TRADE AND INVESTMENT: WE ARE ENCOURAGED BY THE
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BDG'S INTEREST IN RECEIVING FOREIGN INVESTMENT AS ANOTHER
STIMULUS TO DEVELOPMENT AND ARE PLEASED THAT PROGRESS
HAS BEEN MADE IN SETTING THE 1972 NATIONALIZATION CLAIMS.
FINAL SOLUTION OF THESE PROBLEMS WILL MAKE BANGLADESH
MORE ATTRACTIVE TO U.S. INVESTORS. ON TRADE FROM THE
UNITED STATES TO BANGLADESH WE WOULD WISH TO INSURE THAT
AMERICAN VENDORS HAVE A FULL OPPORTUNITY TO BID ON
PURCHASES BY BANGLADESH AND THAT THIS INCLUDE OPEN
MARKET BIDDING FOR FOODGRAIN PROCUREMENT BY THE BDG.

E. WE SUGGEST THE PRESIDENT NOTE, EVEN IF ZIA DOES
NOT RAISE THE ISSUE, THE PROGRESS WHICH HAS BEEN MADE
IN REGIONAL MATTERS. THE VISITS TO BURMA AND PAKISTAN
NOTED ABOVE AS WELL AS THE AGREEMENT TO TALK OUT THE
FARAKKA PROBLEM WITH INDIA AND THE APPARENT SETTLEMENT
OF THE BORDER INFILTRATION ISSUE COULD BE CITED AS
ENCOURAGING SIGNS. DEPENDING ON THE STATE OF PLAY IN
WASHINGTON, THE POSSIBILITY OF U.S. PARTICIPATION
IN A BROADER SCHEME FOR THE MULTILATERAL DEVELOPMENT
OF THE EASTERN WATERS MIGHT BE BROACHED.

F. THE PRESIDENT COULD EXPRESS HIS AWARENESS OF
AND APPRECIATION FOR THE ROLE OF BANGLADESH ON CERTAIN
ISSUES IN INTERNATIONAL FORUMS. BANGLADESH HAS
TAKEN A MODERATE AND RESPONSIBLE POSITION IN NAM ON
A NUMBER OF ISSUES IMPORTANT TO US (KOREA, PUERTO RICO,
GUAM, INDIAN OCEAN).

G. THE PRESIDENT MIGHT ALSO MENTION THE STEPS
ZIA HAS TAKEN AND CONTEMPLATES TAKING IN RETURNING
BANGLADESH TO CIVILIAN RULE AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION.
IN THIS CONNECTION, ALSO, THE QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS
CAN BE TAKEN UP. A POSITIVE APPROACH CAN BE MADE
BY NOTING THE NUMBER OF POLITICAL PRISONERS WHO HAVE
BEEN RELEASED IN THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS AND THAT THE
SPECIAL RULES HAVE RECENTLY BEEN AMENDED TO INCREASE
ACCESS TO THE CIVIL COURTS AND THE APPLICATION OF THE
RULE OF HABEAS CORPUS. WE HOPE THAT A FULL RETURN TO
THE USE OF CIVIL COURTS WILL SOON OCCUR.

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